

# Community Response Partner Guide

## Introduction

---

This Response Partner Guide describes how communities organize and align key functional roles and responsibilities to work collaboratively with other community, State and Federal partners, the private sector and nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) to ensure that their residents and essential services rapidly recover. The following sections describe community roles and responsibilities, response structures and how communities work with key partners to provide an effective, unified response.

## I. Community Roles and Responsibilities Overview

---

The responsibility for responding to emergencies and disasters, both natural and manmade, begins at the local level – with citizens and public officials in the county, city or town affected by the event. Local leaders and emergency managers prepare their communities to manage incidents locally. For communities, the doctrine of **unified command** plays a key role in helping community leaders to coordinate resources within jurisdictions, among adjacent jurisdictions and with the private sector and NGOs, such as the American Red Cross. This section describes the roles and responsibilities of key leadership elements within communities.

**Chief Elected or Appointed Official.** A mayor, city manager or county manager, as a jurisdiction's chief executive officer, is responsible for ensuring the public safety and welfare of the people of that jurisdiction. Specifically, this official provides strategic guidance and resources during emergency preparedness, response and recovery efforts. Emergency management is a core obligation of local leaders.

The Mayor—or chief elected community official—is in charge of the national response in his or her community.

Chief elected or appointed officials must have a clear understanding of their roles and responsibilities for successful emergency management and incident response. At times, these roles may require providing direction and guidance to constituents during an incident, but their day-to-day activities do not focus on emergency management and incident response. On an ongoing basis, elected and appointed officials may be called upon to help shape or modify laws, policies and budgets to aid preparedness efforts and to improve emergency management and incident response activities.

Any incident can have a mix of political, economic, social, environmental, public health and financial implications with potentially serious long-term effects. **Significant incidents require a coordinated response (across agencies and jurisdictions, and including the private sector), during which elected and appointed officials must make difficult decisions under crisis conditions.**

Elected and appointed officials help their communities prepare for, respond to and recover from potential incidents. Key responsibilities include:

- Establish strong working relationships locally with other jurisdictional leaders and with core private sector business and NGO leaders. The objective is to get to know your colleagues in advance of an incident.
- Lead and encourage community leaders to focus on emergency management preparedness and mutual support.
- Support participation in local mitigation efforts within the jurisdiction and, as appropriate, with the private sector.
- Understand and implement laws and regulations that support emergency management and incident response.
- Ensure that local emergency preparedness plans take into account the needs of individuals with special needs or those with companion or service animals prior to, during and after an incident.

**Community leaders also work closely with their Members of Congress during emergencies and on an ongoing basis regarding local preparedness capabilities and needs. Members of Congress play an important, ongoing role in supporting their constituents for effective local emergency response and emergency planning.**

Members often help community leaders understand the Federal resources that are available to prepare for emergencies. Especially during high-consequence events, many citizens traditionally contact Members for assistance or information on Federal response policies and assistance. The Department of Homeland Security (DHS) recognizes a special obligation to provide Members representing affected areas timely information about emergency incidents that involve Federal response.

**Emergency Manager.** The local emergency manager has the day-to-day responsibility of overseeing emergency management programs and activities. He or she works with chief elected and appointed officials to ensure that there are unified objectives with regard to the community's emergency response plans and activities. This role entails coordinating all aspects of a jurisdiction's mitigation, preparedness, response and recovery capabilities.

The emergency manager coordinates all components of the emergency management program for the community, to include assessing the availability and readiness of local resources most likely required during an incident and identifying any shortfalls.

Other duties of the local emergency manager might include the following:

- Coordinate the planning process and work cooperatively with other community agencies and private sector enterprises.
- Oversee damage assessments during an incident.
- Advise and inform local officials about emergency management activities during an incident.
- Develop and execute public awareness and education programs.

- Involve private sector businesses and relief organizations in planning, training and exercises.

**The responsibility for responding to emergencies and disasters, both natural and manmade, begins at the local level – with citizens and public officials in the city or town affected by the event.** Therefore, local leaders and emergency managers prepare their communities to manage the incident locally and not rely on help from external sources. Within communities, the principles of **unified command** are applied to integrate response plans and resources across jurisdictions and departments and with the private sector and NGOs.

**Department and Agency Heads.** The local emergency manager is assisted by, and coordinates the efforts of, employees in departments and agencies that perform emergency management functions. Department and agency heads collaborate with the emergency manager during development of the local emergency operations plan and provide key emergency management resources. Participation in the planning process ensures that specific capabilities (i.e., firefighting, law enforcement, emergency medical services and public works) are integrated into a workable plan to safeguard the community.

These department and agency heads and their staffs develop and train to internal policies and procedures to meet response and recovery needs. They should also participate in interagency training and exercising to develop and maintain the necessary capabilities.

## Private Sector

Government agencies are responsible for protecting the lives and properties of their citizens and promoting their well-being. However, the government does not, and cannot, work alone. **In all facets of emergencies and disasters, the government works with private sector groups as partners in emergency management.**

As discussed in the Introduction, the term “private sector” refers to many distinct entities, including for-profit businesses (publicly-traded and privately-owned), trade associations and NGOs, not-for-profit enterprises, faith-based organizations and other private, voluntary organizations. While the *Framework* throughout distinguishes fundamentally between the public and private sectors, it also speaks more particularly to contributions of both businesses and the NGO community.

**Businesses.** Businesses have an invaluable role to play during emergencies. First, they must provide for and protect their employees in the workplace. In addition, emergency managers must work seamlessly with businesses that provide water, power, communication networks, transportation, for-profit medical care, security and numerous other services upon which both emergency response and recovery are particularly dependent.

**Many private sector organizations are responsible for operating and maintaining portions of the nation’s critical infrastructure.** Critical infrastructures include those assets, systems, networks and functions – physical or virtual – so vital to the United States that their incapacitation or destruction would have a debilitating impact on security, national economic security, public health or safety or any combination of those matters. Key resources are publicly or privately controlled resources essential to minimal operation of the economy and the government.<sup>1</sup> DHS has developed a comprehensive *National*

---

<sup>1</sup> *National Infrastructure Protection Plan*, 2006, Glossary of Key Terms, is the source for the definitions of critical infrastructure and key resources. These definitions are derived from the provisions of the Homeland Security Act of 2002 and Homeland Security Presidential Directive 7.

*Infrastructure Protection Plan (NIPP)* that is synchronized with this *Framework*.<sup>2</sup>

Together, government agencies and private sector businesses form a response partnership. This partnership begins at the grassroots level, depending on the local and State resources that are in place, to provide the backbone for disaster management. **During an incident, key private sector business partners should be involved in the local crisis decision-making process or at least have a direct link to key local emergency managers.** Communities cannot effectively respond to, or recover from, emergencies or disasters without strong cooperative relations with private sector businesses.

Essential private sector business responsibilities include:

- Plan for the protection of their facilities, infrastructure and personnel.
- Plan for responding to and recovering from incidents that impact their own facilities and infrastructure.
- Work with emergency management personnel before an emergency occurs to ascertain what assistance may be necessary and how they can help.
- Develop and exercise emergency plans before an emergency occurs.
- Where appropriate, establish mutual assistance agreements to provide specific response capabilities.
- Provide assistance (including volunteers) to support broader community emergency management during an emergency and throughout the recovery process.

**Nongovernmental Organizations (NGOs).** In the world of emergency management, NGOs play enormously important roles before, during and after an emergency. For example, NGOs provide mass sheltering, emergency food supplies, counseling services and other vital support services to promote the recovery of disaster victims. Oftentimes these groups provide specialized services that help individuals with disabilities.

A key feature of NGOs is their inherent independence and commitment to specific sets of interests and values. These interests and values drive the groups' operational priorities and shape the resources they provide. Such NGOs bolster and support government efforts at all levels – from community to State and Federal, for response operations and planning. When planning the allocation of the local community emergency management resources and structures, some community, State and Federal organizations have provided direct assistance to NGOs. These groups collaborate with first responders, governments at all levels and other agencies and organizations.

Examples of NGO and voluntary organization contributions include:

- Train and manage volunteer resources.
- Identify shelter locations and needed supplies.

---

<sup>2</sup> The goal of the NIPP is to build a safer, more secure and more resilient America by enhancing protection of the nation's critical infrastructures and key resources. See <http://www.dhs.gov/nipp> for additional information. The Critical Infrastructure and Key Resources Support Annex provides detailed guidance regarding incident response implementation of the NIPP, including roles and responsibilities, concept of operations and incident-related actions.

- Provide critical emergency services to those in need, such as cleaning supplies, clothing, food and shelter or assistance with post-emergency cleanup.
- Identify those whose needs have not been met and help coordinate the provision of assistance.

**Some private sector organizations and NGOs are officially designated as support elements to national response capabilities.**

- **The American Red Cross.** The Red Cross is a supporting agency to the mass care functions of Emergency Support Function #6 to the *Framework*. It takes the lead in integrating the efforts of the national NGOs that provide mass care services during response operations.
- **National Voluntary Organizations Active in Disasters (NVOAD).** NVOAD is a consortium of more than 30 recognized national organizations active in disaster relief. Their organizations provide capabilities to support response efforts at all levels. During major incidents, NVOAD typically sends representatives to the DHS/Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA)'s National Response Coordination Center to represent the voluntary organizations and assist in response coordination.
- **Citizen Corps.** In recent years, citizen groups have organized to assist public officials in responding to emergencies. Citizen Corps, administered by DHS, is a community-level program that brings government and private sector groups together and coordinates the emergency preparedness and response activities of community members. Through its network of community, tribal and State councils, Citizen Corps increases community preparedness and response capabilities through public education, outreach, training and volunteer service.

**Volunteers and Donations.** Responding to disasters and emergencies frequently exceeds the resources of government organizations. Volunteers and donations can support incident response efforts in many ways, and it is essential that governments at all levels plan ahead for incorporation of volunteers and donated goods into their response processes.

The Volunteer and Donations Management Support Annex provides detailed guidance from a national standpoint, and State and local planners should include similar volunteer and donations management provisions in their emergency operations plans.

**Individuals and Families.** Although not formally a part of emergency management operations, individuals and families play an important role in the overall emergency management strategy. Community members can contribute by:

- **Reducing hazards in and around their homes.** By taking simple actions, such as raising utilities above flood level or taking in unanchored objects during high winds, people can reduce the amount of damage caused by an emergency or disaster event.
- **Preparing a disaster supply kit.** By assembling disaster supplies in advance of an event, people can take care of themselves until first responders arrive. This includes supplies for companion and service animals. See the recommended disaster supplies list at <http://www.ready.gov>.
- **Monitoring emergency communications carefully.** Throughout an emergency, critical information and direction will be released to the public via electronic and other media. By listening and following these directions carefully, residents can

reduce their risk of injury, keep emergency routes open to response personnel and reduce demands on landline and cellular communication.

- **Volunteering with an established organization.** Organizations and agencies with a role in emergency response and recovery are always seeking hardworking, dedicated volunteers. By volunteering with an established voluntary agency, individuals and families become part of the emergency management system and ensure that their efforts are directed where they are needed most.
- **Enrolling in emergency response training courses.** Emergency response training, whether basic first aid through the American Red Cross or a more complex course through a local community college, will enable residents to take initial response actions required to take care of themselves and their families, thus allowing first responders to respond to higher priority incidents that affect the entire community.

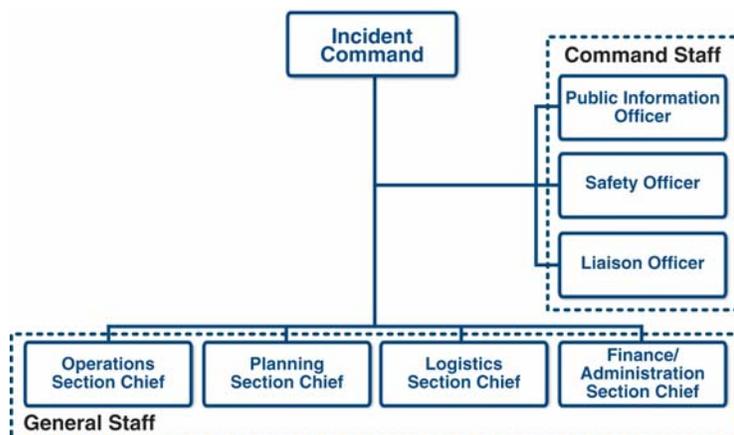
Community Emergency Response Team (CERT) training is one way for citizens to prepare for an emergency.<sup>3</sup> **CERT training is designed to prepare people to help themselves, their families and their neighbors in the event of a catastrophic disaster.** Because emergency services personnel may not be able to help everyone immediately, residents can make a difference by using the training obtained in the CERT course to save lives and protect property.

## II. Community Response: Structures and Staffing

**Field Level: Incident Command.** Local responders use the Incident Command System (ICS) to manage response operations. ICS is a management system designed to enable effective incident management by integrating a combination of facilities, equipment, personnel, procedures and communications operating within a common organizational structure.

A basic strength of ICS is that it is already widely adopted. It is used to organize both near-term and long-term field-level operations for a broad spectrum of emergencies. ICS is used by all levels of government – Federal, State, tribal and local – as well as by many private sector businesses and NGOs. Typically, the incident command is structured to facilitate activities in five major functional areas: command, operations, planning, logistics and finance/administration.

Figure 1. Incident Command Structure



The ICS defines certain key roles for managing an ICS event, as follow.

<sup>3</sup> See <http://www.citizencorps.gov/cert/about.shtm>.

The **Incident Commander** is the individual responsible for all incident response activities, including the development of strategies and tactics and the ordering and release of resources. The Incident Commander has overall authority and responsibility for conducting incident operations and is responsible for the management of all incident operations at the incident site.

The **Command Staff** consists of a Public Information Officer, Safety Officer, Liaison Officer and other positions as required, who report directly to the Incident Commander. The **General Staff** normally consists of an Operations Section Chief, Planning Section Chief, Logistics Section Chief and Finance/Administration Section Chief. An Intelligence/Investigations section may be established, if required, to meet incident response needs.

At the tactical level, on-scene incident command and management organization are located at an **Incident Command Post**, which is typically comprised of local and mutual aid responders. When multiple command authorities are involved, the Incident Command Post may be led by a **unified command comprised of officials who have jurisdictional authority or functional responsibility for the incident under an appropriate law, ordinance or agreement**. The unified command provides direct, on-scene control of tactical operations.

**Local Emergency Operations Center (EOC)**. If the Incident Commander determines that additional resources or capabilities are needed, he or she will contact the **local EOC** and relay requirements to the local emergency manager.

Local EOCs are the physical location where multi-agency coordination occurs. EOCs help form a **common operating picture** of the incident, relieve on-scene command of the burden of external coordination and secure additional resources. The core functions of an EOC include coordination, communications, resource dispatch and tracking and information collection, analysis and dissemination.

EOCs may be permanent organizations and facilities that are staffed 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, or they may be established to meet short-term needs. Standing EOCs – or those activated to support larger, more complex incidents – are typically established in a central or permanently established facility. Such permanent facilities in larger communities are typically directed by a full-time **emergency manager**. EOCs may be organized by major discipline (fire, law enforcement, medical services, etc.), by jurisdiction (city, county, region, etc.), by Emergency Support Function (communications, public works, engineering, transportation, resource support, etc.) or, more likely, by some combination thereof.

During an incident the local emergency manager ensures the EOC is staffed to support the incident command and arranges needed resources. The **chief elected or appointed official** provides policy direction and supports the Incident Commander and emergency manager, as needed.

Figure 2. Local Officials and Emergency Operations Centers



# III. Actions

---

## Introduction

**The *National Response Framework* includes all levels of government working individually and with each other to respond in a unified manner.** The *National Response Framework* does not describe how communities should respond to specific incidents. Instead, the *Framework* describes how communities, guided by the *National Incident Management System (NIMS)*, should prepare for and engage in incident management activities for all incidents.

All communities have two basic responsibilities: (1) follow the **preparedness cycle** to plan, organize, train, equip, exercise and evaluate, in order to strengthen resources and built capabilities in a constant process of preparedness; and (2) conduct an **informed response** to incidents, by deploying the right personnel and resources, with the right training, as part of a single incident management structure, while remaining flexible and adaptable in order to tailor response to the particular needs of the incident.

## Prepare

---

**Effective preparedness is essential for successful response.**

Six tasks form the backbone of the preparedness cycle. Each is described below.

### 1. PLAN

**Deliberate planning makes it possible to manage the entire life-cycle of a potential crisis, determine capability requirements and help stakeholders learn and practice their roles.** Planning includes the collection and analysis of intelligence and information, as well as the development of policies, plans, procedures, mutual aid agreements, strategies and other arrangements to perform missions and tasks. Planning also improves effectiveness by clearly defining required capabilities, shortens the time required to gain control of an incident and facilitates the rapid exchange of information about a situation.

**Public Education:** A key component of planning is to educate the public so that they are able to assume their preparedness roles and responsibilities.

**Local governments have a responsibility to develop detailed, robust all-hazards emergency operations plans.** These plans must have clearly defined leadership roles and responsibilities, and they must clearly articulate the decisions that need to be made, who will make them and when. These plans should include both hazard-specific and all-hazards plans that are tailored to the locale. They should be integrated, operational and incorporate key private sector business and NGO elements.

Plans should include both strategies for no-notice and forewarned evacuations, with particular considerations for assisting special needs (e.g. mobility disabled) populations. Specific procedures and protocols should augment these plans to guide rapid implementation.

## 2. ORGANIZE

**Organizing to support response capabilities includes developing an overall organizational structure, strengthening leadership at each level and assembling well-qualified teams of paid and volunteer staff for essential response and recovery tasks.** The *NIMS* provides standard command and management structures that apply to incident response. This common system enables responders from different jurisdictions and disciplines to work together better to respond to natural disasters and emergencies, including acts of terrorism.

At the community level, preparedness organizations begin the coordination of emergency management and incident response activities well before an incident. These organizations range from groups of individuals to large entities that represent a wide variety of committees, planning groups and other organizations. Preparedness organizations should meet regularly and coordinate with one another to ensure an appropriate focus on helping jurisdictions meet their preparedness needs. The needs of the jurisdictions involved will dictate how frequently such organizations must conduct their business, as well as how they are structured.

**Jurisdictions should conduct a thorough inventory of their resources and conform to *NIMS* organizational and management principles** by:

- Identifying the resources they possess and standardizing those resources in accordance with *NIMS* resource typing requirements.
- Ensuring interoperability of resources by purchasing only those resources that meet commonly accepted standards for performance.
- Ensuring that they have sufficient personnel who are trained in incident management principles and organized into standardized teams.

## 3. TRAIN

**Building essential response capabilities nationwide requires a systematic program to train individual teams and organizations to meet a common baseline of performance and certification standards.**

Individuals and teams, whether paid or volunteer, should meet relevant local, State, Federal or professional qualifications, certifications or performance standards. Professionalism and experience is the foundation upon which successful incident response is built. Rigorous, ongoing training is thus imperative. Content and methods of training must comply with applicable standards and produce required skills and measurable proficiency. FEMA and other organizations offer incident response and incident management training in online and classroom formats.

## 4. EQUIP

**Jurisdictions need to establish a common understanding of the capabilities of distinct types of emergency response equipment.** This facilitates planning before an incident, and rapid scaling and flexibility in meeting the needs of an incident. A critical component of preparedness is the acquisition of equipment that will perform to established standards, including the capability to be interoperable with equipment used by other jurisdictions and/or participating organizations.

Effective preparedness requires jurisdictions to identify and have strategies to obtain and deploy major equipment, supplies, facilities and systems in sufficient quantities to perform assigned missions and tasks. The mobilization, tracking, use, sustaining and demobilization of physical and human resources requires an effective logistics system. That system must support both the residents in need and the teams that are responding to the incident. As noted previously, *NIMS*-compliant resource typing provides a uniform method of sharing commonly understood resources when needed in a major incident.

## 5. EXERCISE

**Exercises provide opportunities to test capabilities and improve proficiency in a risk-free environment.** Exercises assess and validate policies, plans and procedures. They also clarify and familiarize personnel with roles and responsibilities. Well-designed exercises improve interagency coordination and communications, highlight capability gaps and identify opportunities for improvement. Exercises should:

- Include multi-disciplinary, multi-jurisdictional incidents.
- Require interactions with private sector and nongovernmental organizations.
- Cover all aspects of preparedness plans, particularly the processes and procedures for activating local, intrastate or interstate mutual aid and assistance agreements.
- Contain a mechanism for incorporating corrective actions.

**Jurisdictions should exercise their own response capabilities and evaluate their abilities to perform expected responsibilities and tasks.** This is a basic responsibility of all entities and is distinct from participation in other interagency exercise programs.

## 6. EVALUATE AND IMPROVE

Evaluation and iterative process improvement are cornerstones of effective preparedness exercises. Upon concluding an exercise, jurisdictions should evaluate performance against relevant capability objectives, identify deficits and institute corrective action plans. Improvement planning should develop specific recommendations for changes in practice, timelines for implementation and assignments for completion.

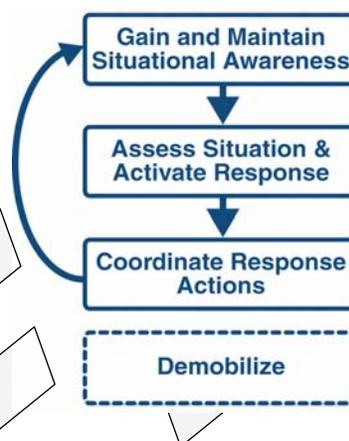
**All jurisdictions should institute a corrective action program to evaluate exercise participation and incident response, capture lessons learned and make improvements in their response capabilities.** An active corrective action program will provide a method and define roles and responsibilities for identification, prioritization, assignment, monitoring and reporting of corrective actions arising from exercises and real world events. The National Exercise Program contains a corrective action program system, a web-based tool that enables Federal, State and local emergency response and homeland security officials to implement the corrective action program process. In this way, the continuous cycle of preparedness yields enhancements to community preparedness.

## RESPOND

Once an incident occurs, priorities shift – from building capabilities to employing resources to preserve life, property, the environment and the social, economic and political structure of the community. Depending on the size, scope and magnitude of an incident, communities, States and, in some cases, the Federal Government will be called to action.

Four key response actions typically occur in support of an emergency response mobilization: (1) gain and maintain situational awareness; (2) assess the situation and activate key resources and capabilities; (3) effectively coordinate response actions; then, as the situation permits, (4) demobilize. These response actions are illustrated in Figure 3, and their core elements are described below.

Figure 3. The Response Process



### 1. GAIN AND MAINTAIN SITUATIONAL AWARENESS

**Baseline Priorities.** Situational awareness requires continuous monitoring of relevant sources of information regarding actual incidents and developing hazards. The scope and type of monitoring vary based on the type of incidents being evaluated and needed reporting thresholds. Critical information is passed through pre-established reporting channels according to established security protocols. Priorities include:

- **Providing the right information at the right time.** For an effective national response, jurisdictions must continuously refine the ability to assess the situation as an incident unfolds and rapidly provide accurate information to decision-makers in a user-friendly manner. It is essential that all levels of government, the private sector and NGOs share information in order to develop a common operating picture and synchronize their response operations and resources.
- **Improving and integrating national reporting.** Situational awareness must start at the incident scene and be effectively communicated to local governments, the State and the Federal Government. Jurisdictions must integrate existing reporting systems to develop an information and knowledge management system that fulfills national information requirements.
- **Linking operations centers and tapping subject-matter experts.** States, communities and the Federal Government have a wide range of operations centers that monitor events and provide situational awareness, including local and State emergency operations centers, DHS's National Operations Center and other Federal operations centers. Based on their roles and responsibilities, operations centers should identify information requirements, establish reporting thresholds and be familiar with the expectations of decision-makers and partners. Situational awareness is greatly improved when experienced subject-matter experts identify critical elements of information and use them to form a common operating picture.

**Actions.** Incident reporting and documentation procedures should be standardized to enhance situational awareness and provide emergency management/response personnel with ready access to critical information. Situation reports should contain verified information and explicit details (who, what, where and how) related to the incident. Status reports, which may be contained in situation reports, relay specific information about resources. Based on an analysis of the threats, jurisdictions issue warnings to the public and provide emergency public information.

Jurisdictions can address the inherent challenges in establishing successful information-sharing networks by:

- Creating intelligence fusion centers that bring together into one central location law enforcement, intelligence, emergency management, public health and other agencies to evaluate together available information and intelligence.
- Utilizing national standards for information sharing that foster the ability of systems to exchange data.
- Joining national efforts that encourage intelligence and information sharing and include regional, multi-State and Federal systems.
- Reporting incident information to DHS using established mechanisms. Terrorist threats and actual incidents with a potential or actual terrorist link should immediately be reported to a local or regional Joint Terrorism Task Force.

**Alerts.** Based on an analysis of the threats, jurisdictions issue warnings to the public and provide emergency public information.

## 2. ASSESS THE SITUATION, ACTIVATE RESOURCES AND CAPABILITIES

**Baseline Priorities.** When an incident or potential incident occurs, responders assess the situation, identify and prioritize requirements and activate available resources and capabilities to save lives, protect property and meet basic human needs. In most cases, this includes development of an **Incident Action Plan** by the Incident Command in the field and support plans by the appropriate jurisdictional entities.

**Actions.** In the event of, or in anticipation of, an incident requiring a coordinated response, jurisdictions should:

- Identify staff for deployment to the **emergency operations center**. These organizations have standard procedures and call-down lists and should notify department and agency points of contact.
- Work with emergency managers to take the necessary steps to provide for continuity of operations.
- Activate **Incident Management Teams (IMTs)** in accordance with *NIMS*. IMTs are incident command organizations made up of the Command and General Staff members and appropriate functional units of an Incident Command System organization. The level of training and experience of the IMT members, coupled with the identified formal response requirements and responsibilities of the IMT, are factors in determining the "type," or level, of IMT.

- Activate **Specialized Response Teams**. Jurisdictions may have specialized teams including search and rescue teams, crime scene investigators, public works teams, hazardous materials response teams, public health specialists or veterinarians.

### 3. COORDINATE RESPONSE ACTIONS

**Baseline Priorities.** Coordination of response activities occurs through incident management and response structures based on pre-assigned roles, responsibilities and reporting protocols. Critical information is provided up through pre-established reporting chains to decision-makers. The efficiency and effectiveness of response and supporting organizations will be enhanced by full application of the *NIMS* with its common principles, structures and coordinating processes. Specific priorities include:

- ***Jurisdictions are responsible for the management of their emergency functions.*** Such management includes mobilizing and pre-positioning assets. Community governments, in conjunction with their voluntary organization partners, are also responsible for implementing plans to ensure the effective management of the flow of volunteers and goods in the affected area.
- ***Coordinating initial actions.*** Initial actions are coordinated through the on-scene Incident Command and may include: immediate law enforcement, fire and emergency medical services; emergency flood fighting; evacuations; transportation system detours; and emergency information for the public. As the incident unfolds, the on-scene Incident Command updates Incident Action Plans and revises courses of action based on changing circumstances.
- ***Coordinating requests for additional support.*** If additional resources and capabilities are required, the on-scene Incident Command requests the needed support. Additional incident management and response structures and personnel are activated to support the response. In large-scale responses, it is critical that personnel understand roles, structures, protocols and concepts to ensure clear, coordinated actions. In most cases, resources and capabilities are integrated into the *NIMS* structure at the appropriate levels.
- ***Identifying and integrating resources and capabilities.*** Resources and capabilities must be marshaled, deployed, received, staged and efficiently integrated into ongoing operations. For large, complex incidents, this may include working with a diverse array of organizations, ranging from multiple private sector companies and NGOs through pre-arranged agreements and contracts.
- ***Coordinating communications.*** Effective public communication strategies are essential following an incident. Incident Command may elect to establish a Joint Information Center (JIC), which would be responsible for coordinating public information across community, tribal, State and Federal governments, as well as with the private sector and NGOs. By developing media lists, contact information for relevant stakeholders and coordinated news releases, the JIC facilitates dissemination of accurate, consistent, accessible and timely public information to numerous audiences.

**Actions.** Specific response action will vary depending upon the scope and nature of the incident. Response actions are based on the shared objectives established by the Incident Command and Unified Coordination Group. Response activities include, but are not limited to:

- Warning the public and providing emergency public information.
- Implementing evacuation plans that include provisions for special needs populations and companion animals.
- Sheltering evacuees in pre-identified shelters and providing food, water, ice and other necessities.
- Performing search and rescue.
- Treating the injured.
- Providing law enforcement and investigation.
- Controlling hazards (extinguishing fires, containing hazardous materials spills, etc.).
- Providing consistent, timely and accurate public information.

**Neighboring communities play a key role in providing support through a framework of mutual aid and assistance agreements.** These agreements are formal documents that identify the resources that communities are willing to share during an incident. Such agreements should include:

- Definitions of key terms used in the agreement.
- Roles and responsibilities of individual parties.
- Procedures for requesting and providing assistance.
- Procedures, authorities and rules for allocation and reimbursement of costs.
- Notification procedures.
- Protocols for interoperable communications.
- Relationships with other agreements among jurisdictions.
- Treatment of workers' compensation, liability and immunity.
- Recognition of qualifications and certifications.

While States typically act as the conduit between the Federal and local governments when Federal assistance is supporting a local jurisdiction, there are certain instances in which Federal partners may play an active role in a unified command. For example, wildfires on Federal land or oil spills are activities for which certain Federal departments or agencies may have authority to respond under their own statutes and jurisdictions.

**State Assistance.** States provide much of the external assistance to communities. The State is the gateway to several government programs that help communities prepare. When an incident grows beyond the capability of a community, and responders cannot meet

the needs with mutual aid and assistance resources, the community contacts the State. The State has capabilities such as the National Guard that can be used to help communities respond and recover. The State also has access to Federal assistance. If an incident is beyond the community and State capability, the Governor can seek Federal assistance. The State will collaborate with the impacted communities and the Federal Government to provide the help needed.

**State-to-State Assistance.** If additional resources are required, the State may request assistance from other States by using interstate mutual aid and assistance agreements such as the **Emergency Management Assistance Compact (EMAC)**. Administered by the National Emergency Management Association, EMAC is a congressionally ratified organization that provides form and structure to the interstate mutual aid and assistance process. Through EMAC, a State can request and receive assistance from other member States.<sup>4</sup> Such State-to-State assistance may include:

- Invoking and administering a Statewide Mutual Aid Agreement, as well as coordinating the allocation of resources under that agreement.
- Invoking and administering EMAC and other compacts and agreements, and coordinating the allocation of resources that are made available to and from other States.

**Requesting Federal Assistance.** When an incident overwhelms State and mutual aid resources, the Governor may request Federal assistance. In such cases, the affected community, the State and the Federal Government will collaborate to provide the necessary assistance. The Federal Government may provide assistance in the form of funding, resources and critical services. **Federal departments and agencies respect the sovereignty and responsibilities of community, tribal and State governments while rendering assistance.** The intention of the Federal Government in these situations is not to command the incident response, but rather to support the affected community, tribal and/or State governments.

**Robert T. Stafford Disaster Relief and Emergency Assistance Act.** When it is clear that State or tribal capabilities will be exceeded or exhausted, the Governor can request Federal assistance, including assistance under the **Robert T. Stafford Disaster Relief and Emergency Assistance Act** (Stafford Act).<sup>5</sup>

The Stafford Act authorizes the President to provide financial and other forms of assistance to State and local governments, certain private nonprofit organizations and individuals to support response, recovery and mitigation efforts following Presidential emergency or disaster declarations.

#### 4. DEMOBILIZE

Demobilization is the orderly, safe and efficient return of an incident resource to its original location and status. Demobilization should begin as soon as possible to facilitate accountability of the resources and be fully coordinated with other incident management and response structures.

---

<sup>4</sup> For more detail about EMAC, see <http://www.emacweb.org/>.

<sup>5</sup> Details regarding Federal involvement under the Stafford Act are available at the **NRF Resource Center**, <http://www.fema.gov/NRF>. Additional information about the Stafford Act's disaster process and disaster aid programs is available at <http://www.fema.gov/hazard/dproc.shtm>.

**Actions.** At the community level, demobilization planning and activities should include:

- Provisions to address and validate the safe return of resources to their original locations.
- Processes for tracking resources and ensuring applicable reimbursement.
- Steps to ensure responder safety.
- Accountability for compliance with mutual aid provisions.

## RECOVER

---

**Once immediate lifesaving activities are complete, the focus shifts to assisting individuals, families and businesses in meeting basic needs and returning to self-sufficiency.** Recovery is the development, coordination and execution of service- and site-restoration plans for affected communities, and the resumption of government operations and services through individual, private sector, nongovernmental and public assistance programs. Such programs:

- Identify needs and resources.
- Provide housing and promote restoration.
- Address care and treatment of affected persons.
- Inform residents and prevent unrealistic expectations.
- Implement additional measures for community restoration.
- Incorporate mitigation measures and techniques, as feasible.

**Actions.** Recovery from disaster is unique to each community and depends on the amount and kind of damage caused by the disaster and the resources that the community has ready or can quickly obtain. In the short term, recovery is an extension of the response phase in which basic services and functions are restored. In the long term, recovery is a restoration of both the personal lives of individuals and the livelihood of the community.